2: Courlander B-S (1937-1959) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

fires in their houses at night to keep out the damp cold that sweeps through the passes. And a man on the trail before dawn may wear a blanket over his head and carry a glowing ember with him for warmth.

On the south coast there are sometimes hurricanes and tidal waves, and many a small fishing boat and grass-covered house has been washed away in these storms. But the great mountains of the southern range deflect the winds, so that to the north their full fury is never known.

In the great Bay of Gonaïves the fishing boats sail out at night with the friendly winds that carry them to the fishing grounds of the island of La Gonave, and they return to the shore with their catches in the morning, or in the afternoon with the setting sun. The sailing boats from the tiny fishing village called Ville Matelot each day pass the deserted islet named Isle à Cabrit, where four Indian camps once stood. Today Isle à Cabrit is only a waterless, denuded place, a hunting ground for Carib and Arawak pottery and carved stone images.

In the frontier lakes of the Cul-de-Sac Plain there are wild ducks and alligators. Here the villagers fish with nets from rafts and dugout canoes. Now and then an iguana is seen, but there is little other game, because the edible wildlife of the country was long ago eaten by hungry people.

For the things that grow wild the Haitian is grateful—the avocado, the mango, the cashew, and the cotton which once planted produces again and again each year. He is grateful for the coconut palms, the calabash tree, the gourd vines, and the medicinal herbs that grow on every side. But the gifts of nature are not prolific. Most of the great stands of timber—lignum vitae, mahogany, dyewood and pine—have been cut away. Once fertile garden spots have dried up, and the soil that produces the yams, the pumpkins, the kaffir, and the rice is tired.

But the Haitian himself is not tired. He has suffered from malaria, yaws, and chronic hunger; yet out of the great old mountains of Haiti he has fashioned a way of life and a nation.

The Haitian of today was created out of the fabric of three continents—Africa, America, and Europe. He was shaped out of the plains and hills of Nigeria, Dahomey, and the Congo; the summers and winters of Europe; and the mountains and mountain mists of Haiti itself. He is the synthesis of the folk beliefs of the French and Spanish peasants, the Yoruba and the Arada of West Africa, and perhaps of the Carib Indians with whom he had close contact during his first days in the New World. He has brought into affinity the religious practices of Africa and the beliefs of the Church of Rome. He is outwardly simple and poor, but inwardly he is a complicated and rich man. He is rich in music, in the capacity for spiritual expression, in tradition, in folklore, and in memories. He has been able

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3

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1. *The Marbial River, a branch of the Cestohine, in southern Haiti. Twenty-eight thousand people, many of them tenants or sharecroppers, depend upon agriculture in the Marbial Valley for their livelihood.*

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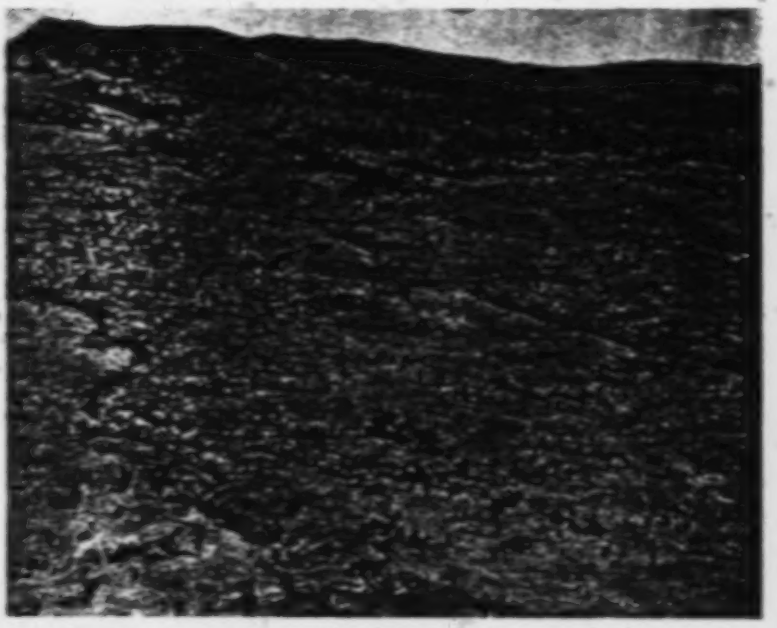

[139] 2. *Haiti's "Pine Forest," once a dense woodland, is an expanse of mountain terrain denuded of most of its trees and scarred by gullies. The timber was cut primarily for fuel for limekilns.*